



THE PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

CHIEF
TOM
MERRILL



Our residents are owed professional service, delivered by professional firefighters, representing professional organizations

Personal Professional Personal Development Tips

All Under Your Own Personal Control!

1. SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

- Aware of the well earned honorable and trustworthy reputation enjoyed by the fire service
- Aware of our responsibilities as firefighters and department members - on and off duty
- Aware of all the signs and symbols that identify you as a volunteer Firefighter: The Maltese cross, blue lights, stickers and apparel - Behave and remember, all eyes are on you!
- Aware that we live in a much different and much more judgmental world today
- Aware that every response, every detail, every public interaction presents an opportunity to create, maintain and enhance your personal professional image and reputation - act like a professional serving in a professional organization

2. BEHAVIOR & ACTIONS

- Simple: Behave & act appropriately - you know what is right and what is wrong
- Understand that *perception is reality*
- We need to make good decisions and not bring dishonor or embarrassment to our departments and the fire service as a whole
- Even off duty behavior impacts the professional reputation

3. TRAIN REGULARLY AND NEVER STOP LEARNING

- A professional firefighter embraces training and *participates* in it on a regular basis
- We cannot pretend to be ready - we need to actually be ready!
- Volunteer firefighters are not wearing costumes and do not play in a land of make believe
- The public is counting on all of us to be prepared and ready - **THEY are counting on YOU!**
- Training never stops and needs to be embraced by all members of all ranks and tenures
- For as long as you choose to volunteer you must remain a student of the game
- Stay on top of current trends, developments & events in the fire service-locally & nationally - get out of your own bubble from time to time and learn to network with your peers
- Build good habits & pay attention to what is happening to developments in your area
- Embrace Personal Professional Development - remember, you can't control the cards you are dealt, it's how you play your hand that counts

4. EMBRACE THE OWNERSHIP MENTALITY

- Own everything you are personally responsible for in your role in your volunteer firehouse
- Never utter the phrase, "I am just a volunteer" and use it as an excuse for not being prepared to do your job competently and thoroughly
- Exercise "Quiet Professionalism" and remember, that in addition to your conduct in the firehouse and performance at the emergency scene, nothing speaks louder for a firefighter's reputation than efficiently doing the jobs that they are responsible for time and time again
- No job in the firehouse is beneath you - all are vital to the organization's overall success and professional reputation
- Remember, individual accountability contributes to organizational excellence
- If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters
- Take pride in the jobs you do - even the smallest, most mundane task
- Pay attention to the details and **TAKE OWNERSHIP!**

"Being a professional firefighter has nothing to do with earning a paycheck - but has everything to do with attitude, appearance, commitment and dedication."



Click or Call:
tamerrill@aol.com
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5. ***DRESS LIKE A PROFESSIONAL***

- Let's be honest. How we dress can have a definite impact on our professional image and reputation
- Let's be honest: If we want to be thought of like a professional we should look like a professional
- Side benefit: Looking professional also inspires confidence
- Respect our profession by avoiding t-shirts with political, profane, sexist, sexual, discriminatory or controversial messages and images - on and off duty
- A professional leads by example and dresses and gears up appropriately in the performance of their duty

6. ***CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SOCIAL FITNESS***

- Professional firefighters have a duty and obligation to extend good customer service and exercise proper social fitness decorum at all public interactions
- Appropriate social fitness = respect + kindness + compassion + patience + empathy (Be Nice!)
- People will remember how you acted and the way you talked to them more than what you even said
- The world is nasty and mean spirited enough. Don't let it spill over into our fire service world
- True professionals learn how to talk to people and understand the impact of their words and mannerisms
- True compassion and genuine empathy are a universal language that convey true professionalism
- Have real empathy for the situation the customer is dealing with, no matter how trivial it may seem to you
- Social fitness decorum applies in the firehouse too - we cannot let personal biases interfere with the mission of the fire service and our role as professional first responders
- Other people's worst day should be the professional volunteer firefighter's finest day
- Let the iconic Maltese cross symbolize to all that there are still good people in this world

7. ***SOCIAL MEDIA***

- Recognize it can be both a benefit and a burden - think before posting
- What you post - even your own personal postings - is being posted as a firefighter and member of your department
- Put your department first! Don't bring unwanted attention on your department
- Do not post about internal business conflicts, controversies...nobody cares anyway (and it happens in all organizations)
- ***Professionals don't troll!***

8. ***EMBRACE TEAMWORK AND EXTEND MUTUAL RESPECT ACROSS THE GENERATIONS***

- Mutual respect among the generations is paramount! Give respect to earn respect!
- Senior member? Avoid the old silent treatment Help new members grow. The job of an old (senior) firefighter is to help the young firefighter become an old (senior) firefighter. Show them the way. Teach them how to be a firefighter! Explain our core values and remember it's more than just hoses, hooks and halligans
- New member? Appreciate and support your department's proud traditions and customs - ask questions
- All members: Ditch your ego, get over yourself and concentrate on performing the mission and embracing true Brotherhood and sisterhood

9. ***RESPECT YOUR HISTORY***

- Celebrate and share our great fire service history, people, stories and traditions
- Celebrate and share your great volunteer fire departments history, people, stories, and traditions
- You stand on the shoulders of those who came before. As long as we speak their names and tell their stories, they are never forgotten - ***LEARN THEIR NAMES! LEARN THEIR STORIES! PASS THEM ON!***
- ***Know your why!***
- Remember, "There are no new lessons to be learned from a firefighter's death or injury. The cause of a tragedy is usually an old lesson we have not learned or have forgotten along the way"

******* BONUS TIP *******

A professional volunteer firefighter is a proud volunteer firefighter!